



## KALAMAZOO CONGRESS

The ISHBS Session at the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo will have three presenters and the Presider will again be Prof. K. Christian McGuire.

Following the presentations, there will be a concert by soprano Linn Maxwell. Ms Maxwell has performed in operas and concerts throughout the USA and in 25 other countries. Her many solo credits include the San Francisco Opera, Netherlands Opera, Hungarian State Opera, Symphonic orchestras of Chicago, Toronto, Mexico City and Opera Grand Rapids, where she is a regular performer. Last year she performed her one-woman musical "Lili Marlene" at the Abingdon Theatre in New York City to critical acclaim.

The abstracts of the presentations are as follows:

### **From Pagan Cosmos to Christian Creation: A Historical Path from Late Antique Priscillianus to Medieval Hildegardis**

Francisco Buide del Real (Pontifical University of Salamanca, Spain, Dept. of Theological Studies)

Why can't we properly speak of Hildegard's visions and science as pagan? Can we consider a pagan reminiscence the astronomy, medicine and science of Christian Late Antiquity and Middle Ages? Why and how do ancient and medieval Christians look differently to the sky, future, and world as the pagans did?

One Christian author from Late Antiquity, Priscillian, shows some differences that we can follow to the time of Hildegard von Bingen in the Middle Ages. The Christianity had a self and differentiated consciousness and identity in its very origins, at least in relation with other religions, with paganism and pre-Christian religions when it arrived. Judaism should be studied in a different way.

The two chosen authors represent a Christian thought that considers the importance of the

natural world and natural knowledge and "science". The first one, Priscillian, represents the last period of Antiquity, the beginning of Late Antiquity, and Early Medieval Age in the movement that develops specially in North Western Spain in the decades following his death as heretic for the Church and martyr for his disciples. Priscillian lived in the times of the controversy between paganism and Christianity, contemporary to Ambrose of Milan and Symmacus in Rome. In his apologetic writings (Würzburg manuscript works, *Tractata*) he defends himself from the accusation of manichaeism and some kind of syncretism with pagan cosmological and astrological "superstitions". He refers to the one Christian God and a symbolical interpretation that he references in his ascetic and religious movement. He uses them (this was one of the reasons to the accusation), but he reinterprets them, despite the accusation of a heretical symbolic interpretation.

As the centuries go on in the Middle Ages, the pagan traditions go also on, but the danger of pagan accusation and superstition is weaker, and the Christian thought and practice develops the capability to reinterpret all the cosmological and astrological Greco-Roman, that is pagan, tradition. In the books of Hildegard we found both the natural knowledge and science, and the mystical and theological thought. In these two ways of reading and studying Hildegard we can consider how the Middle Ages were able (in all these centuries between Priscillian and Hildegard) to redefine the old pagan cosmological tradition and thought in a new way. This new vision was neutral from the religious point of view. And when it was religious, it was no more pagan (polytheist and mythical) but a Christian one (monotheist, creationist and in an allegorical and symbolical use of cosmological references and elements). As an interesting change from Priscillian to Hildegard, we can point out that one of the accusations to Priscillian movement was the role of women in the teaching, which Hildegard and some other medieval women developed in an orthodox, accepted and even canonized way.

## **Mapping Medieval Spaces: Chronotopes of the *Ordo virtutum***

Michael Gardiner (New England Conservatory, Boston, Dept. of Theoretical Studies)

The expansive temporal landscape unfolded by the 87 chants of the *Ordo virtutum*, the 12<sup>th</sup> century music drama (ca 1150) of Hildegard von Bingen, coordinates three phases of space-time: *tangential*, *radial*, *cumulative*. These terms refer not only to elements of musical space and language but also mark shifts in the spiritual intentionality of the soul from a state of accumulation towards an orientation of acceptance and transcendence and, as such, constitute hybrid chronotopic structures, weaving together both sonic and textual lines of development (graphic representations of all sonic structures will be used). The *tangential* phase (the first 21 chants) depicts the soul's existential confusion and limited world view, paralleled by an equally limited musical design characterized by a narrow range and severe restriction of pitch centrality. In opposition, the *radial* phase (chants 22 – 57) form the virtues' individual responses to the soul, a section in which all narrative development is suspended and in its place a process of interiorization is opened, along with novel pitch centers and registral apexes. The *cumulative* phase (chants 58 – 87) witnesses the emergence of the soul as a fully-developed spiritual warrior, now capable of defeating the serpent and structurally makes use of sonic rupture as a form of non-dual embrace, one that transcends and includes prior materials in its reorganization.

### **Hildegard von Bingen and the Living Light**

Linn Maxwell Keller (Grand Rapids Opera, Michigan)

This is a lively portrayal of the 12<sup>th</sup> century German abbess, Hildegard von Bingen. Hildegard returns after 900 years to share her timeless message of hope, healing, and Viriditas (life force), along with anecdotes and intrigues from her remarkable life. Known as “the Sybil of the Rhine”, she became quite well known throughout Germany in her lifetime for her writing, prophesying and preaching as well as being a

healer of renown. Hildegard founded two monasteries, and she made four preaching tours after the age of 60. In this one-woman play, Linn combines her spirituality and her line-long commitment to music and drama to portray this amazing woman. She performs seven of the many songs Hildegard composed, accompanying herself on the psaltery, medieval harp, and organistrum.

### **K. Christian McGuire (Augsburg College and McNally Smith College, Minnesota)**

(Mr. McGuire's abstract was not available at the time of printing.)

Linn Maxwell's presentation “**Hildegard von Bingen and the Living Light**” will be given as an evening performance sponsored by ISHBS: Written and performed by Maxwell Keller the program is directed by Erv Raible.

Ms Maxwell has performed in operas and concerts throughout the United States and abroad. Her many solo credits include San Francisco, The Netherlands, and Hungarian State opera houses, The symphony orchestras of Chicago, Toronto, and Mexico City, as the Grand Rapids Opera, with which she is associated. She recently performed her one-woman musical “Lili Marlene” at the Abingdon Theater in New York to critical acclaim. Erv Raible is the Executive Artistic Director of the International Cabaret Conference at Yale University.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

We welcome paper presentation possibilities for the Hildegard Session at the 2011 Congress on Medieval Studies. Please send them to the Society's, President Pozzi Escot at 24 Avon Hill Cambridge, MA 02140 or by email to [Pozzi.escot@necmusic.edu](mailto:Pozzi.escot@necmusic.edu)

## **MEMBERS ACTIVITIES**

**Dr. Werner Lauter**, a very prominent Hildegard scholar who lives in Rudesheim am Rhein in Germany (very close to Bingen) has sent us a

number of pictures in connection with the Abbey of St. Hildegard that he found while going over his papers. These will be published on our Website.

Many members will remember Dr. Lauter for his contributions to the 1998 festivities in Germany in celebration of Hildegard's 900<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Composers **Pozzi Escot** and **Robert Cogan** gave a public lecture at Bennington College for a public lecture titled "Ecologies of Music: Sounds, Numbers, Cultures – and Us."

**Escot's** book "The Poetics of Simple Mathematics in Music" just went to its third printing. The book includes a discussion of four of Hildegard's chants. Her work was performed at the Dundalk Institute of Technology in Ireland in February and her "Sonata V" will be performed by pianist David Holzman at Harvard University on April 19.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

A new CD including **Pozzi Escot's** "Clarinet Concerto (2004)", performed by Michael Norsworthy, soloist, and the Callithumpian Consort was released by Albany Records on April 1st.

**Kathy Luethje** is the editor of a recently published book of 40 essays by practitioners of the expressive arts titled "**Healing with Art and Soul: Engaging One's Self Through Art Modalities**"

Ms Luethje tells us that some of the essays are based on Hildegard's ideas and techniques for healing.

The book is available at Amazon.com or, at a discount, directly from Ms. Luethje at: 12501 Ulmerton Road, Number 176 Largo, FL 33774

**ISHBS President Pozzi Escot and her partner, Robert Cogan** have transcribed **Four Books of the Chants of Hildegard von Bingen**. These painstaking transcriptions by two of America's most admired composers, are not changed to

conform to certain modern ideas – they are simply Hildegard's original works without alterations or additions.

They may be purchased from  
Cynthia Crawford, Manager  
Publication Contact International  
24 Avon Hill  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
For more information, please send inquiries by email to: demeslon@verison.net

### Note to Authors:

If you would like to have your latest works listed in this column, please send information about them and where they may be obtained, to [frances@trafford-flynn.com](mailto:frances@trafford-flynn.com).

## AN ESSAY

**Hildegard von Bingen and her Dispute with Heresy**

Therese McGuire, Chestnut Hill College

**"The Apocalyptic prophet senses the presence of evil in church and society to a much greater degree than his or her contemporaries, but the seer does not react fatalistically to its manifestation."**

(Curtis Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards*)

Hildegard von Bingen employed the language of the apocalyptic seer and the visionary in her denunciation of the actions displayed by some of the uneducated and lax clergy of her day, whom she blamed for the heresy, which was spreading rapidly throughout Europe in her time. She presents the heretics as types of false prophets who are the forerunners of those who will usher in the apocalyptic era preceding the end of time. She based most of her predictions regarding the apocalyptic era on the predictions of earlier scholars.

In the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, circa 776, an Asturian priest, Beatus of Libana, whose commentary on the *Apocalypse* had a profound influence on scholarship in Spain and its effect soon spread throughout the rest of Europe. This

preoccupation with death and damnation led of necessity to a preoccupation with apocalyptic dread. Whenever catastrophic events occur throughout history, some scholars turn to the *Apocalypse* to verify the warnings inherent in its dreary doleful words, which predict the coming of the *Antichrist* and the end of the world. Tenth century Spain looked upon the Moorish invasion and occupation of their country as apocalyptic, and the 12<sup>th</sup> century prelates considered the control of the Holy Land by the Muslims as cause to promote the Crusades. The inescapable scourge of Genghis Khan (1162-1227) and the Mongols horrifying the people of the 13<sup>th</sup> century; the plagues and the Hundred Years War haunted the inhabitants of Europe during the 14<sup>th</sup> century; and throughout the ensuing centuries, tragic and fearful happenings were all causes to sound the clarion call for alarm proclaiming the end of the world, which impelled many to look afresh at biblical apocalyptic warnings.

Hildegard emerges from her writings as one of the most strikingly original apocalyptic thinkers. As a 12<sup>th</sup> century mystic, she described the exact psychic she experienced when observing her mystical visions. She states that they were, "Neither ecstasies or hallucinations; that she was neither asleep nor rapt out of herself and they took place in her soul while she retained the normal use of her senses". This contemplations, however, the fruit of the heart's devotion, did not bring an immediate perception of God, for he is seen only through the windows of faith. Hildegard writes, "The visions which I saw, I did not perceive in dreams, in delirium, but with corporeal ears and eyes, watchful and intent of mind, and according to the will of God". Hildegard equated her prophesy with that of the apocalyptic prophet of the Old Testamnt, Ezekiel, who denounced and attacked the corruption of his time. She spoke out fearlessly in the face of opposition against the corruption of the Church. It was in her role as mystic and prophetess that she received many requests from scholars as well as from popes and statesmen, who begged her to reveal for them from her prophetic visions, glimpses into the future. John of Salisbury and St. Thomas Becket hoped to determine the ending of the existing

papal schism; Pope Anastasius requested copies of her writings, which his predecessor, Pope Eugenius II had praised, but instead of a copy of her works, Hildegard sent Anastasius a letter containing a severe rebuke condemning the fact that his work was not directed toward advancing peace and justice in this world. She wrote, "O man who has wearied of restraining the magniloquence of pride among the men placed in your bosom . . . Why do you not recall those who are shipwrecked, who cannot rise from their troubles; cut the root of evil which suffocates the good and useful plants? You neglect Justice, the daughter of the King . . . who was committed to your care; you permit her to lie prostrate on the earth, her diadem smashed, her tunic worn (cited in Ferrante 24)."

Even the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa was subjected to her warnings and dire predictions because of his political excesses and injustices. He continued to be involved in electing and supporting the illegitimate popes in the Great Papal Schism. In a letter to Barbarossa, Hildegard exhorts him to, "Beware lest the Supreme King cast thee down for the blindness of thine eyes, which do not rightly see how thou holdest the rod of light government in thy hand".

A hidden life of silence, simplicity, education and prayer seems a poor foundation indeed for the fame, which eventually surrounded Hildegard. How she emerges into the difficult and sometimes dangerous arena of ecclesiastical, political and social circles revolves around her determination to write about her visions and *Scivias* (her first book) was the result. After her visions were accepted as authentic, Hildegard embarked upon a career as correspondent exchanging letters with the great and powerful, such as Barbarossa, Henry II, and Eleanor of Aquitaine, as well as with abbots, abbesses, and simple monks and nuns. In these letters she did not hesitate to administer reproofs and warnings although she also advised, encouraged, and directed the spiritual lives of her confidants.

In addition to corresponding by letter to affect reforms and denounce the heresy of the Cathars,

Hildegard undertook numerous journeys from her monasteries in Bingen to regions in Germany (Cologne, Trier, Wurzburg, Frankfurt) and beyond, to give counsel, rebuke wrongs, settle conflicts and give advice. She visited monasteries where she instructed both monks and nuns, preached in cities, in open places, and cathedrals, often speaking in German for the uneducated peasants who knew no Latin. She spoke before masters, doctors, and other wise men and women and exhorted the poorly educated clergy so that they might be more helpful to the common people. Hildegard undertook these sometimes dangerous journeys at a time when ecclesiastical authorities were attempting to impose stricter enclosure upon communities of women. In spite of recurring illness and the many injunctions she received about claustration, she remained adamant about the continuation of her missionary journeys for she believed that much of the decadence of the Church and of the society of her time, “was caused by masculine weakness and women therefore must act where men had failed; since the clergy would not, it was left to women to preach against heretics and make missionary journeys up and down the Rhine and Nahe”.

Hildegard’s purpose in her writings and sermons was to identify and denounce the evils and felonies sweeping through the Church as a result of a largely poorly educated clergy and bishops who bought their places of honor as second sons of noble families. She endeavored to awaken these members of the Church to the evils inherent in some of their works so that they might be forgiven and that these evils might be remedied before greater ills befell the works. In her third book of visions, *Liber divinorum operum*, she predicts the fall of the Holy Roman Empire, but she never indicates in which historical period her warnings concerning the evils which she foretells would occur. In 1220 the Cistercian prior Gebeno of Eberbach kept Hildegard’s prophetic writings, publishing an anthology of her apocalyptic prophecies titled *The Mirror of Future Times*. Gebeno hoped to combat the growing Cathar heresy by supplying the prophetic utterances of Hildegard about the rise of heresy, its dangerous proclamations, and her castigation of a lazy

clergy, which he himself deemed to be the root of the problem. Gebeno requested the nuns of Hildegard’s abbey then to allow him to do what Hildegard herself had explicitly forbidden in her epilogue to the *Liber divinorum operum*, and that was to abridge her words. In this epilogue Hildegard writes, “But whosoever rashly conceals these words written by the finger of God, madly abridging them, or for any human reason taking them to a strange place and scoffing at them, let that human be reprobated and God’s finger shall crush him (Scivias III.xiii.16)”.

Evidently Hildegard’s warning did not influence Gebeno for he published this collection of excerpts from Hildegard’s writings, which opened her words to various and disastrous interpretations. These excerpts became much more popular and had greater appeal to later medieval tastes than her original works; and indeed the Reformation later on contributed to further distortions. Andreas Oisander, a Nurnberg preacher and friend of Martin Luther, claimed Hildegard in 1527 as a Protestant because of her prophecies against negligent clergy. The aspect of her writings and sermons most appealing to Gebeno was the legitimate criticism of clerical corruption and the coming of Antichrist. His compilation circulated widely in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. We know now that by excerpting sections of Hildegard’s writings and thus also distorting the full originality of her words, the effect on future generations of scholars and reformers was disastrous.

At a time in history when heresy was punished by fire and sword, Hildegard was a gentle reformer who believed that heresy should be exterminated with loving reproofs and logical discussions more in keeping with the teachings of Christ than with those of radical factions. She found reason to denounce various heretical sects, which were prevalent, since heresy to her signaled the apocalyptic end of the world. The most infamous of these groups who merited her denunciations was the heretical Cathars and she spoke courageously against their beliefs. This neo-Manichaeic sect, which flourished in the 12<sup>th</sup> century derived their name from the Greek work

*katharos* (pure). They preached a heretical doctrine that was anticlerical, antisacramental, anti-Christian and antisocial. They believed that all matter was evil and therefore Christ could not have had a true mortal body, and that he did not die or rise from the dead. They professed faith in an angelic Christ who did not really undergo human birth or human death; they denounced marriage claiming that it was essentially evil since it united matter with spirit, and those who died in a state of matrimony could not be saved. They forbade sexual intercourse, to eat meat, since all flesh is created by the devil, held that suicide was both commendable and lawful and, because suicide liberated the human spirit from matter, it was the highest virtue.

While Hildegard believed that the human body since the fall of Adam was prone to evil and therefore had to be on guard against temptation, she did not preach that the body itself is evil as did the Cathars. Rather she advocated taking prudent care of the body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Regarding marriage itself, Hildegard preached that God made men and women to compliment and empower each other. She maintained that, "Man cannot be man without woman, and woman cannot be woman without man. They need each other to exist". In a letter to the prelates of Mainz, Hildegard characterized the Cathars as those who defy holy humanity to Jesus and the sanctity of the body and blood, which is in the offering of bread and wine. The Cathars denied the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In the sermon that she preached in Trier for the Feast of Pentecost in 1160 she mentioned that the Cathars had success because of lack of pastoral care and she condemned the German clergy for their weakness in the combat against them. She warns against the Cathars with all the power of her knowledge and faith. After she had preached against the Cathars, a militant group reacted violently against them and some were unjustly burned at the stake. She did not condone the persecution of heretics as she had already exhorted the authorities to expel the heretics but not kill them, for they are the image of God also.

In her letter to William of Kirchheim, who had requested a copy of the sermon she had preached at Kirchheim in 1170, Hildegard predicts that princes and heretics will rise up against the clergy denouncing their wayward living, reckoning their priestly office as nothing, and demanding that they be cast out from the Church. Some see this now as a foreboding of the Protestant Reformation. Years later this prediction was taken out of context and interpreted by some in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to mean the mendicant friars and, years after that, others saw it to be fulfilled in the establishment of the Jesuits. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century the threat of Catharism, above all heresies prompted Pope Gregory IX to appoint a full-time Papal Inquisition in 1233. Hildegard's role in condemning the early Cathars is indeed more than a footnote in their history. Gebenos' excerpted writings crossed the English Channel into Britain, where they were embraced and promulgated by another group, the Lollards.

## **BRIEFLY NOTED**

### **A Few Comments on Spelt**

Frances Flynn, Editor, Qualelibet

In perusing the Internet recently I found some information about spelt that may interest our readers.

Spelt, the wheat grain that was most commonly associated with Hildegard, has been reviving in popularity in recent years and is once again a thriving crop in the Europe and North America. Even the small local bakery that serves two or three villages where I live in rural North Carolina has been baking spelt bread regularly for the past couple of years.

Doing a little research I found out that evidence of spelt usage has been found in Neolithic sites (2500 to 1700 BC) in central Europe. By the time of Christ it had become the principal grain species in Germany and Switzerland and was also in common use in Britain. It was introduced to the United States in the 1890s but was unable to compete commercially with bread wheat.

Spelt was rediscovered both in Europe and the United States by the organic gardening movement, largely because it requires much less fertilizer than wheat, and spurred on by increasing interest in Hildegard, especially in regard to nutrition.

An article attributed to Reuters of London describes the grain and its comeback:

“Little-known strains of wheat such as spelt are making a comeback in health and environmentally conscious Europe.

“Spelt, a tall and gangly plant, was once a key source of grain nutrition for Europeans from Belgium, through the Upper Rhine valley, Bavaria and Switzerland into Austria, but it was driven to farming's fringes by mechanization some 150 years ago.

“Higher in protein content than its nemesis soft wheat, it cannot compete with the latter's huge yields under the mineral fertilizers of industrial farming. The first harvesters also broke its brittle ears and severely cut yields.

“But renewed health consciousness, the rise of organic farming, and the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hildegard von Bingen, the 12<sup>th</sup> century German abbess and mystic, helped trigger a comeback in the rugged grain that thrives where its cousins wither.”

And, so, Hildegard's legacy continues.

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**The publishing deadline or the next edition of *Qualelibet* is**

**September 15, 2010**

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**Dues and address changes should be sent to our Treasurer and Web Master (see page one for additional details).**

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[www.hildegard-society.org](http://www.hildegard-society.org)**

## **REMINDERS**

**Please remember to mail or email news items, comments, calendar entries and letters to the editor to:**